



Public Safety Newsletter

April 1, 2010

Dear Community Friends:

Don't Be Fooled by Con Artists

April 1st is referred to as April Fool's Day, but fraud and scam artists are working 365 days a year to cheat you out of your money. It can be a call on the telephone, an email, someone knocking at your door or contacting you in person anywhere and anytime. The good news is that you can avoid being an easy target by following a few simple rules.

Every year billions of dollars are lost to fraudulent activities. Often, you will be pressured into donating or purchasing right now! Prizes, vacations, charities, club memberships, or investments can be the front used by con artists.

Fool Proof Your Life With These Tips

- ❑ If the offer seems too good to be true, it probably is! Never give your financial information to callers, unsolicited emails or strangers contacting you in public. Hang up, delete and do not talk and just walk away!
- ❑ Legitimate organizations do not require immediate response and should provide you with information in the mail.
- ❑ Take your time and have others review information with you. Make sure they are bonded and licensed and/or have excellent independent references.
- ❑ Never give your credit card number over the phone unless you initiate the call and know who you are calling.
- ❑ If someone will not let you get off the phone, hang up.
- ❑ Familiarize yourself with an organization by asking for references. Do not deal with questionable persons or organizations.
- ❑ Ask a lot of questions. If in doubt do not do it.
- ❑ Be cautious of anyone claiming, "You will never get another opportunity like this."

Con Games to Avoid

There is a never-ending variety of con artists and games they play. Although it is impossible to name every con game, the link below may help you avoid becoming a victim. For a complete list of scams go to

http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection/ScamNet/content/pages/full_list.html

Additional tips to follow

- ❑ Always take time to read contracts and verify the legitimacy of companies and individuals.
- ❑ Talk to a trusted friend or relative before you make a decision.
- ❑ Beware of an offer that is only good if you respond right away.
- ❑ Avoid impulses to donate, repair, or purchase items.
- ❑ Do not give Social Security, bank, or charge account numbers to others. Being asked for personal information does not mean you have to share it.
- ❑ Keep door-to-door salespersons or unknown callers outside of your home. Post "No Solicitors" sign on your home.
- ❑ Think before you respond. Protect yourself.

If you become a victim of a con game, report it. Do not be afraid or embarrassed, because you are not the first person to fall victim to a scam. The people carrying out scams are professionals at what they do and practice their schemes in all parts of the country. It can happen to you. Remember, if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Resources common fraud schemes:

<http://www.fbi.gov/maicases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>.

Prevent Burglary & Home Improvement Scams

Warmer weather signals the arrival of things pleasant - like spring, and unpleasant - like burglars and con artists. We urge you to take precautions to safeguard your homes and property against these unwelcome visitors.

To prevent the chances of being victimized, residents are urged to observe the following precautions:

- ❑ Keep doors and windows locked when inside your home or working in yard - even if you will be out for only a short time.
- ❑ Request identification from utility representatives - true representatives carries identification and will gladly show it to you. Call their company for verification.
- ❑ Only rarely will legitimate home improvement companies solicit door-to-door. They usually distribute fliers or make phone calls - it's more cost effective for them.
- ❑ Never pay in cash. Using a check keeps a record of the transaction and often provides identification of the person cashing the check.
- ❑ Beware of excuses such as "We just finished a job around the corner and had extra materials that we could offer you at a discounted price." Professional companies do not operate in that manner.
- ❑ Call police immediately if you notice someone unfamiliar to the neighborhood or acting suspiciously.

Be aware of various ruses that have been used to gain entry, including posing as utility representatives, asking for a drink of water, looking for property that is for sale, or selling home improvement services.

Alert

In the past year, victims have been working in their yard while suspects entered through unlocked doors or window.

Resources To Keep You Informed

Police Blotter, <http://spdblotter.seattle.gov/>

Subscribe to SPD: Crime Blotter

<http://feeds.feedburner.com/SeattlePoliceSouthwestPrecinct>

Police Blotter, Megan Sheppard, West Seattle Herald

<http://www.westseattleherald.com/news/police%20blotter/>

West Seattle Blog, Tracy Record, Editor

http://westseattleblog.com/blog/?page_id=4988

Seattle Police Department main web page

<http://www.seattle.gov/police/>

Southwest Precinct Web-page

<http://www.seattle.gov/police/Precincts/Southwest/default.htm>

Seattle Police Crime Statistics

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/police/crime/stats.htm>

For **More Information** Call: **Benjamin Kinlow**, Crime Prevention Coordinator, (206) 684-7724 or email benjamin.kinlow@seattle.gov. Check out www.seattle.gov/police/precincts/southwest/prevention.htm